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STATINTL

Not an Issue

THE SOBER and commendable review of the U-2 incident by Senator Fulbright's Foreign Relations Committee has produced nothing that gives the Democrats a real issue.

It is the opinion of Mr. Fulbright that, having absolved Allan W. Dulles and his Central Intelligence Agency of any blame, the matter comes down to "questionable decisions" by the Administration.

But reading further into the views of the Arkansas Democrat, it becomes clear that the decision he regards as most questionable was actually a choice of equally hard alternatives.

This was the decision of President Eisenhower to accept responsibility for the U-2 espionage operation. Senator Fulbright questions it from the advantage of hindsight. But his personal opinion omits mention of the grim dilemma with which the President was confronted.

Faced with the overwhelming evidence the Soviet government had assembled of the spying mission of the U-2, the dilemma was:

- The President could accept responsibility, which he did, calmly and courageously.

- Or he could evade responsibility and go to the Paris Summit as an open target for a charge by Premier Khrushchev that the President of the United States did not know what was going on in his own Administration. This is precisely the baseless charge, by the way, that some of Mr. Fulbright's fellow Democrats are trying to make stick.

It is our opinion the President made by far the better choice, however unprecedented it may have been.

It is also plain that the President's decision, is not a valid political issue, despite the efforts of Adlai Stevenson and Senators Kennedy and Symington to make it one. Senator Lyndon Johnson is right in placing the U-2 affair outside the bounds of partisanship.

If this is an issue at all, it is one between the free and open society of America and the closed, secret and sinister society of communism.